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ABSTRACT

Northern Virginia Community College (NVCC) conducted a student survey to identify causes of first-time student attrition between fall 1999 semester and the following spring semester. A Non-Returning Student Survey was mailed to 2,026 such students, 185 of whom responded by mail, and 494 more of whom were contacted for telephone interviews. Reasons cited for not returning for spring semester: (1) 17% reported they had transferred or otherwise accomplished their educational objectives; (2) 48% cited competing demands of family, employment and educational commitments; (3) 14% cited financial reasons; and (4) 12% of respondents did not return because of academic difficulties and/or dissatisfaction with NVCC. Survey findings indicated that: (1) the primary reason male respondents did not return was finance related; (2) female respondents indicated family or personal circumstances as the primary reason for discontinuing their studies; (3) 18% of the Asian respondents indicated transfer to another college as their primary reason for not returning, compared to 3% of Black respondents and 3% of Hispanic respondents; and (4) family or personal barriers to education appeared to increase with the respondents' age while financial barriers appeared to decrease. Appendix A contains comments from the Non-Returning Student Survey and a copy of the survey instrument. (PGS)

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NVCC NON-RETURNING STUDENT SURVEY REPORT

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Office of Institutional Research
Northern Virginia Community College

October 2000

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NORTHERN VIRGINIA COMMUNITY COLLEGE

OFFICE OF INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH

The purpose of the Office of Institutional Research is to conduct analytical studies and provide information in support of institutional planning, policy formulation and decision making. In addition, the office provides leadership and support in research related activities to members of the NVCC community engaged in planning and evaluating the institution's success in accomplishing its mission.

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NVCC NON-RETURNING STUDENT SURVEY REPORT

Abstract

This report is part of a series on student retention at Northern Virginia Community College. The Office of Institutional Research (OIR) conducted a study of first-time students who were enrolled at NVCC during the fall 1999 semester but did not return for the following spring semester. The purpose of the study was to understand the reasons that influenced students' decisions not to return to NVCC. In order to identify causes of student attrition, the Non-Returning Student Survey was mailed to 2,026 first-time students who did not return to NVCC for the spring 2000 semester. In addition to the mail survey, telephone interviews were conducted in order to obtain an in-depth understanding of why these students did not return.

A positive finding from the survey showed that approximately 17% of the respondents did not return because they had accomplished their goal. Specifically, 9% of the respondents did not return to NVCC because they had transferred to another school and 8% did not return because they had achieved their educational objective. This finding is an indication of NVCC accomplishing its mission.

Approximately 48% of the non-returning students did not return to NVCC because of their present life circumstances. Many of these respondents were trying to balance family, employment, and educational commitments in their lives. Their responses indicated that because of their multiple responsibilities and the competing demands on their time and energy, they had decided not to return for the spring semester. It is uncertain as to how much NVCC can help this group of students through formal retention programs.

Approximately 14% of the respondents stated that financial reasons were the most important factor influencing their decision not to return. Given the relatively low poverty level in the region as well as the low tuition fees at NVCC, this finding is rather surprising. However, more detailed information gathered through telephone interviews revealed that this group included many individuals who valued education but had financial commitments or priorities that prevented them from returning to NVCC. Some of these respondents indicated they would have returned if they had obtained financial aid, or if NVCC had offered installment payment programs for tuition expenses.

A third group of respondents, approximately 12%, did not return to NVCC because of academic difficulties and/or dissatisfaction with NVCC. Formal retention programs and academic intervention can assist these students, enabling them to continue at NVCC and achieve their academic goals.

When the primary reasons for not returning were analyzed by selected student characteristics, several differences emerged. The primary reason why male respondents did not return was finance related. Female respondents, however, indicated family or personal circumstances as the primary reason for discontinuing their studies. The primary reason for not returning to NVCC also varied according to the race of the respondents. Eighteen percent of the Asian respondents indicated transfer to another college as their primary reason for not returning. In contrast, only 3% of Black

respondents and 3% of Hispanic respondents stated that transfer to another college or university was their primary reason for not returning to NVCC. When the survey data was analyzed by the age of the respondents, family or personal barriers to education appeared to increase with the respondents' age while financial barriers appeared to decrease.

NVCC NON-RETURNING STUDENT SURVEY REPORT

Introduction

In spring 2000, the Office of Institutional Research (OIR) conducted a study on student retention at Northern Virginia Community College. The study focused on students who were enrolled at NVCC during the fall 1999 semester but did not return for the following spring semester. The purpose of the study was to determine the factors that influenced the students' decisions not to return to NVCC. By identifying the reasons why students do not continue their education, NVCC can plan and implement programs that increase student retention and thus assist students in their educational goals.

Methodology

The Non-Returning Student Survey was mailed to 2,026 first-time students, who attended NVCC during the fall 1999 semester and did not return for the following spring semester.[1] The Non-Returning Student Survey was designed to solicit information on why these students only enrolled at NVCC for one semester. Respondents were first asked to indicate all of the reasons for not continuing at NVCC and then to indicate the most important reason for not returning. An additional question was asked as to whether their main reason for not returning was either permanent or temporary. The students were also asked if there was a possibility of returning to NVCC or attending another college. In addition, the survey asked the respondents if there was anything NVCC could have done to help them continue their education.

In addition to the Non-Returning Student Survey that was mailed, telephone interviews were conducted in order to understand why students did not return to NVCC. Individuals were contacted and asked the same questions as presented on the mail survey. Several respondents participated in both the mail survey and telephone interviews. The duplicate responses were eliminated from the analysis presented in this report.[2]

The analysis reflects both the mail survey and telephone interview responses that were received from the Non-Returning Student Survey. A total of 679 individuals responded to the surveys, with 185 mail survey and 494 telephone interview respondents. There was a slightly larger percentage of male respondents (52%) than female respondents (48%). The largest percentage of the respondents (59%) was between 18 to 21 years of age, followed by 16% of the respondents who were between 30 to 44 years of age. In addition, the majority were White respondents (56%), followed by Black respondents (19%), Hispanic respondents (12%), and Asian respondents (8%).[3]

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[1] First-time students were defined as those who were new to NVCC regardless of whether or not they had previously attended another college.

[2] When duplicate responses occurred, the telephone responses were eliminated from the analysis presented in this report.

[3] The demographic breakdown of the survey respondents is a statistically representative sample of all the students that attended NVCC during the fall 1999 semester and did not return the following spring semester.

This report is divided into four sections. Section I presents the analysis of the Non-Returning Student Survey for the College. Section II presents data on whether or not respondents plan on returning to NVCC, and Section III presents a brief synopsis of comments from the respondents. Finally, the survey responses analyzed by selected student characteristics are presented in Section IV. In addition, the Appendix presents a list of the comments and suggestions regarding NVCC from the mail survey respondents.

Section I: Reasons for Not Returning to NVCC

Reasons for Not Returning

In both the mail survey and telephone interviews, respondents were asked to indicate their reason(s) for not returning to NVCC for the spring 2000 semester. Table 1 presents the reasons why respondents did not return. As some students had several reasons for not returning, multiple responses to the question were allowed. The most often cited reasons for not returning to NVCC were family or personal problems, financial difficulties, and employment-related circumstances.[4] Unavailability of courses/programs and academic difficulties were also given as reasons for not returning to the College. Dissatisfaction with NVCC courses, services, and facilities were least likely to be indicated as reasons for not returning to the College.

As shown in Table 1, the two most frequently selected responses for not returning were financial reasons (20%) and family or personal reasons (20%). An additional 17% of the respondents stated that conflict with employment prevented them from continuing at NVCC, and 13% stated new employment opportunities as a reason for not returning. Less than 5% of the respondents did not return to NVCC due to academic reasons. Some students felt that their classes were too difficult while others were disappointed with the grades they had received. In addition, a small percentage of the respondents cited dissatisfaction with courses, instructors, College personnel, or facilities as a reason for not returning to NVCC.

Table 1: Reasons for Not Returning to NVCC

Reasons for Not Returning to NVCC	# of Responses	% of Total Respondents *
Family or Personal Reasons	135	19.9
Financial Reasons	135	19.9
Conflict with Employment	112	16.5
Employment Opportunities	88	13.0
Transferred to Another School	64	9.4
Relocation/distance	56	8.3
Achieved Educational Goal	52	7.7
Unavailability of Courses/Programs	46	6.8
Academic Reasons	29	4.3
Dissatisfied with Instructor(s)	28	4.1
Transportation Problems	28	4.1
Health Reasons	25	3.7
Dissatisfied with Course(s)	22	3.2
Dissatisfied with Academic Advising or Counseling	19	2.8
Dissatisfied with College Personnel	10	1.5
Child Care Problem(s)	7	1.0
Dissatisfied with NVCC Facilities	5	0.7
Other	75	11.1

* Respondents could answer with more than one reason for not returning to NVCC.

[4] Telephone interviews revealed that many of the students who felt "lost" or "not connected to the College" selected "personal reasons" as a reason for why they did not return to NVCC.

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Single Most Important Reason for Not Returning

Of the choices listed in Table 1, respondents were asked to select the single most important reason for not returning to NVCC. The largest percentage of respondents, 15%, selected family or personal circumstances as the most important reason for not returning to NVCC in the spring semester (see Table 2). This was followed by 14% who selected financial reasons as the most important factor in their decision not to return. Nine percent of the respondents did not return because they had transferred to another college or university. An additional 8% of the respondents did not return because they had achieved their educational goal.

In addition, less than 7% of the respondents did not return because of academic reasons or unavailability of courses/programs. Less than 5% of the respondents indicated dissatisfaction with courses, instructors, College personnel, or academic advising as the single most important reason for not returning to NVCC (see Table 2).

Table 2: Single Most Important Reason for Not Returning to NVCC [5]

Single Most Important Reason for Not Returning to NVCC	Responses	
	#	%
Family or Personal Reasons	98	15.0
Financial Reasons	94	14.4
Conflict with Employment	67	10.2
Employment Opportunities	62	9.5
Transferred to Another School	58	8.9
Achieved Educational Goal	52	7.9
Relocation/distance	46	7.0
Unavailability of Courses/Programs	25	3.8
Academic Reasons	18	2.8
Dissatisfied with Instructor(s)	12	1.8
Transportation Problems	16	2.4
Health Reasons	20	3.1
Dissatisfied with Course(s)	9	1.4
Dissatisfied with Academic Advising or Counseling	6	0.9
Dissatisfied with College Personnel	4	0.6
Child Care Problem(s)	3	0.5
Dissatisfied with NVCC Facilities	1	0.2
Other	63	9.6
Total	**654**	**100.0%**

[5] In the data presented in Table 1, respondents could give more than one reason for not returning to NVCC. Table 2 presents information on the single most important reason respondents selected for not returning.

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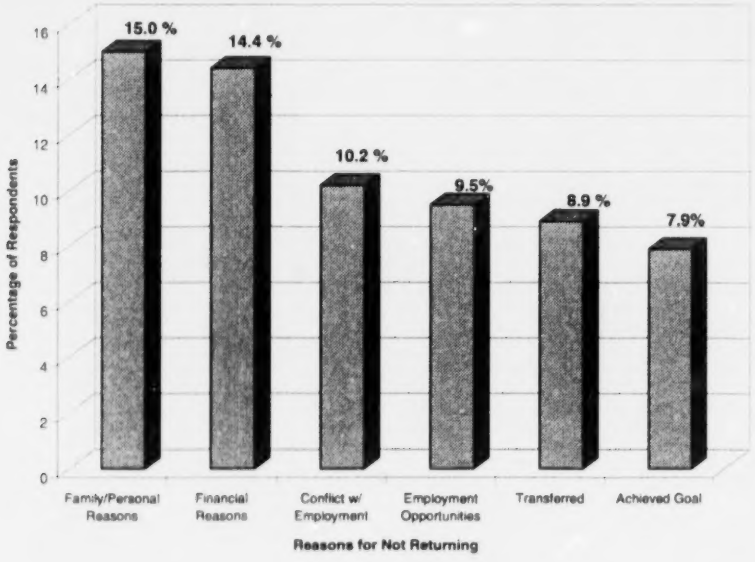
Figure 1 presents the top six reasons that respondents gave for not returning to NVCC. As previously mentioned, the largest proportion of respondents (15%) stated the most important reason for not returning to NVCC was due to family or personal circumstances. This was followed by 14% who gave financial circumstances as the most important reason for not returning to the College.

Figure 1: Most Important Reasons for Not Returning to NVCC



The primary causes of student attrition were grouped into the four main areas of family and employment circumstances, financial circumstances, academic difficulties, and dissatisfaction with NVCC. As shown in Figure 2, the majority of the respondents (35%) did not return to NVCC due to family and employment circumstances. This area included family or personal commitments, conflicts with employment, and new employment opportunities. Formal retention programs, developed by the College, may be less effective in assisting this group of students.

An additional 14% of the respondents did not return due to financial reasons. Some of the respondents did not return because they had financial commitments other than their NVCC education. Examples included respondents who were saving money for an automobile or a new home and could not afford to attend NVCC simultaneously. Some respondents might have been able to return to NVCC if they had received financial aid or if alternative payment schedules had been available to assist them with tuition expenses. NVCC can directly impact the retention rates of these individuals by increasing the level of information that first-time students receive related to financial aid procedures and by allowing installment payments for tuition.

As shown in Figure 2, approximately 9% of the respondents stated their main reason for not returning to the College was because of dissatisfaction with NVCC services and/or courses. This included those respondents who stated the main reason for not returning

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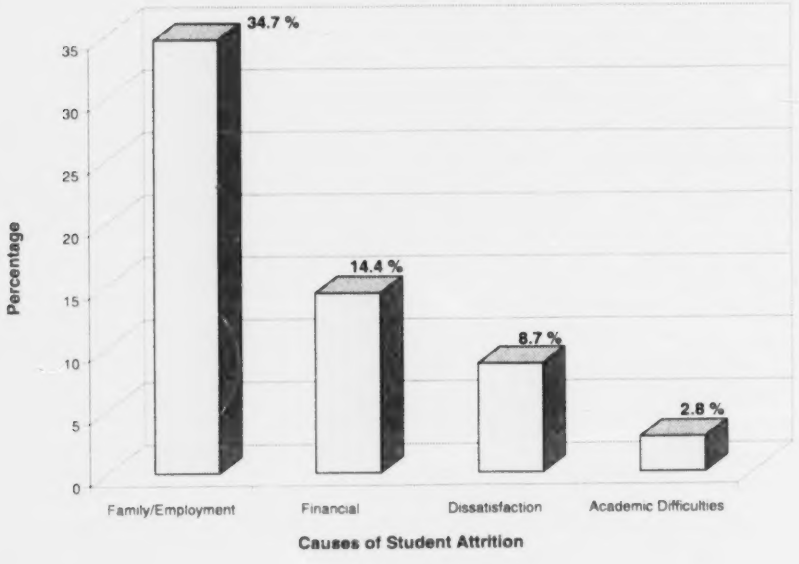
was due to unavailability of courses or programs. In addition, approximately 3% of the respondents did not return due to academic difficulties.

Figure 2: Major Areas of Student Attrition



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Section II: Possibility of Returning to NVCC

Respondents were asked whether their primary reason for not returning to NVCC was temporary or permanent. The responses to this question are presented in Table 3.[6] Sixty-seven percent of the respondents stated their reason for not returning to NVCC was temporary and 19% stated they did not know whether their reason was temporary or permanent. Only 13% of the respondents were positive that they would not be returning to NVCC. This appears to be consistent with the fact that 17% of the respondents indicated they had either transferred to another school or had achieved their educational goals and therefore would not be returning to NVCC.

Table 3: Classification of the Reason for Not Returning to NVCC

Classification of Reasons	Responses	
	#	%
Temporary	319	67.1
Permanent	64	13.5
Don't know	92	19.4
Total	**475**	**100.0%**

The responses (whether the primary reason for not returning to NVCC was either temporary or permanent) were also analyzed by the age of the respondents. There was little difference between students of different age groups who stated their reason was temporary. Approximately 69% of the students between 25 to 44 years of age stated their reason was temporary, followed by 67% of the students 24 years of age or less. Similarly, there was little difference by age in the proportion of students who stated their primary reason for not returning was permanent.

The Non-Returning Student Survey asked respondents if there was a possibility of returning to NVCC. The majority, 63%, stated there was a possibility of enrolling at NVCC in the future. Only 8% of the respondents stated they would not be returning to NVCC (see Table 4). The high proportion of respondents, who stated there is a possibility of taking other courses at NVCC in the future, may indicate that many students view NVCC as an institution of lifelong learning.

[6] It is important to note that the sample size varied across the survey questions because of changes in the number of respondents to each question. The same number of respondents did not answer each question on the Non-Returning Student Survey. Since the responses to each question were analyzed separately, the variations in the sample size did not affect the results.

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Table 4: Possibility of Returning to NVCC

Possibility of Returning to NVCC	Responses	
	#	%
Yes	363	63.1
No	44	7.6
Maybe	109	19.0
Don't Know	59	10.3
Total	**575**	**100.0%**

The responses to whether there was a possibility of returning to NVCC were also analyzed by the age of the respondents. The highest proportion of respondents (67%), who stated there was a possibility of returning, were those between 25 to 44 years of age. However, a much lower proportion of the respondents 45 years of age or older stated they would be returning to NVCC (53%).

Responses to the question, "Do You Think You Will Attend Another College in the Future?" are presented in Table 5. Approximately 48% of the respondents stated there was a possibility of attending another college, and 44% were not sure about the possibility of attending another institution.

Table 5: Possibility of Attending Another College

Is There a Possibility of Attending Another College?	Responses	
	#	%
Yes	233	47.5
No	44	8.9
Maybe	102	20.8
Don't Know	112	22.8
Total	**491**	**100.0%**

The question, "Is There a Possibility of Attending Another College?" was also analyzed by the age of the respondents. A large proportion of students (56%), who were less than 24 years of age, stated there was a possibility of returning to another college or university. In comparison, only 19% of the respondents who were 45 years of age or older stated there was a possibility of returning to another institution.

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Section III: Suggestions from Survey Respondents

Respondents were given the opportunity to answer the question, "Is There Anything That NVCC Could Have Done to Help You Continue with Your Studies?" Approximately 45% of the respondents to this question (both the mail survey and telephone interviews) stated there was nothing that NVCC could have done to help them continue their studies. Most of these respondents indicated they had discontinued their enrollment at NVCC due to personal or family reasons, financial problems, and/or conflicts with their current employment.

However, respondents did suggest several areas where NVCC could have helped them continue their studies. One of the suggestions often stated was to provide better guidance to students regarding financial aid. Some of the respondents (approximately 5%) did not know what financial aid assistance was available to them or how to apply for financial aid. Counseling services was another area where respondents felt that NVCC could improve and retain more students. Approximately 5% of the respondents did not know which courses to take for specific degree requirements, which courses transferred to other institutions, and other curriculum related questions. Many respondents indicated they were frustrated by the lack of counseling and career support available to them and suggested the College hire additional counseling staff and extend the hours of operation. In addition, several respondents indicated that students should receive more information on counseling services and information regarding who they should speak with when questions arise.

Many of the respondents stated that personal finance issues prevented them from returning to NVCC for the spring semester. Several respondents suggested that the College should allow students to pay their tuition in installments, thus alleviating financial difficulties for some students.

Another area where respondents offered suggestions was professor/student relationships. Respondents suggested that by enhancing professor/student relationships students would feel more connected to the institution. Many respondents indicated they were dissatisfied with the advice they received from faculty members on courses and curriculum related questions.

Respondents to the Non-Returning Student Survey were also asked if they had comments or suggestions for College administrators. Approximately one half of the comments from both the telephone and mail surveys were positive in nature. These respondents were satisfied with the services and education they received while enrolled at NVCC. Other respondents pointed out areas (both instruction and student services) in which NVCC could improve. Several respondents indicated the College should provide more on-line services, including the ability to check grades and register. Related to these suggestions, several other respondents felt the computer lab facilities needed to be upgraded. Another area, which respondents felt should be improved, was parking services. Several respondents stated the need for parking permits was not clearly communicated to new students and that the parking facilities were inadequate.

Section IV: Reasons for Not Returning to NVCC- Analyzed by Selected Characteristics

As shown in Table 2, respondents to the Non-Returning Student Survey were asked to indicate their main reason for not returning to NVCC. These survey responses were further analyzed by the respondents' gender, race, age, educational objective, and overall grade point average. These selected characteristics were chosen in order to gain a better understanding of the respondents and to determine if the reasons for not returning to NVCC varied according to demographic and academic factors.[7]

Most Important Reason for Not Returning by Gender

As shown in Table 6, survey responses were analyzed by gender in order to determine if male and female respondents did not return to NVCC for different reasons. Overall, the most frequently indicated reason stated by male respondents for not returning to NVCC was financial circumstances. Female respondents, however, indicated family or personal circumstances as the primary reason for discontinuing their studies. In addition, 11% of the male respondents stated that transferring to another institution was the primary reason for not returning to NVCC compared to 6% of the female respondents (see Table 6).

It appeared that many of the respondents had "traditional gender roles" influencing their decision not to return to NVCC. Particularly, more female respondents had family responsibilities affecting their ability to continue their education at NVCC. Male respondents, however, had more employment opportunities and employment conflicts influencing their ability to continue at the College.

Table 6: Most Important Reason for Not Returning to NVCC by Gender

Primary Reason	Male		Female	
	#	%	#	%
Family or Personal Reasons	36	10.7	62	19.6
Financial Reasons	49	14.5	45	14.2
Conflict With Employment	37	11.0	30	9.5
Employment Opportunities	44	13.1	18	5.7
Transferred to Another School	38	11.3	20	6.3
Other Reasons Listed on Survey	133	39.4	142	44.7
Total	**337**	**100.0**	**317**	**100.0**

[7] The primary reasons for not returning to NVCC, listed in Tables 6 through 9, vary according to the selected characteristic. Each table does not present the same data, as only the most frequently indicated reasons are listed.

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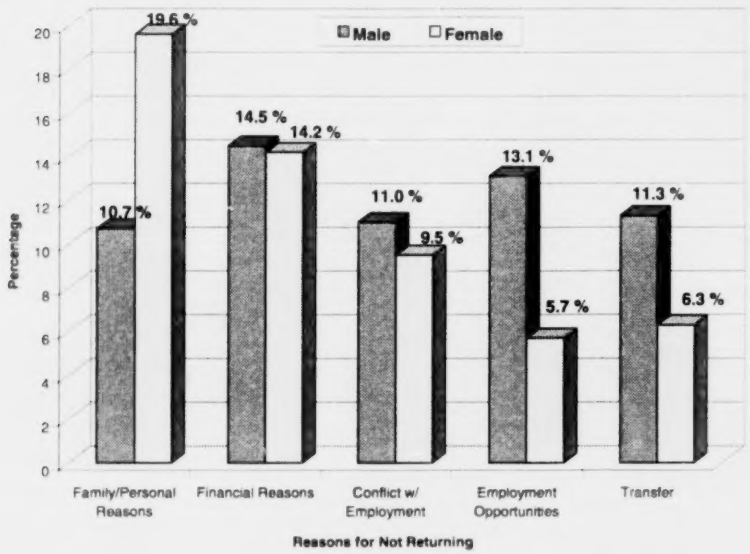
Figure 3 presents, by gender, the five main reasons why respondents did not return to NVCC. The largest percent difference (9%) occurred between male and female respondents who stated that family or personal circumstances were the main reason for not returning (11% male respondents vs. 20% female respondents). In addition, males were more likely than females to cite employment opportunities or transfer as reasons for not returning to NVCC.

Figure 3: Most Important Reason for Not Returning to NVCC by Gender



Most Important Reason for Not Returning by Race

Table 7 and Figure 4 present the primary reasons for not returning analyzed by the race of the respondents. Many respondents stated they did not return to NVCC because they had achieved their educational goal. However, differences in the responses appeared when the data were analyzed by race. Specifically, 11% of the Black respondents stated they had achieved their educational goal compared to 2% of the Asian respondents.

Overall, 9% of the respondents indicated that transferring to another institution was the primary reason for not returning to NVCC. However, 18% of the Asian respondents indicated transferring as their primary reason for not returning. This differs from Black and Hispanic respondents, of whom only 3% in each case gave transfer as their primary reason for not returning (see Table 7).

The number of respondents who stated financial circumstances as the main reason for not returning also differed by race. Twenty percent of the Hispanic respondents stated that financial issues were the main reason for not returning, compared to 13% of the White respondents. In addition, a greater percentage of Hispanic respondents indicated they did not return due to financial reasons as compared to family or personal reasons. Among the other racial categories, family or personal issues and transferring were more predominant reasons for not continuing than financial circumstances.

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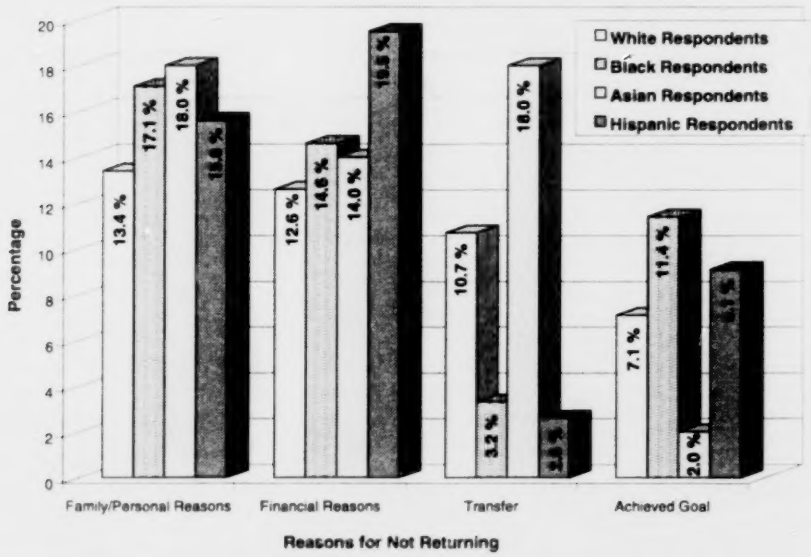
Table 7: Most Important Reason for Not Returning to NVCC by Race

Primary Reason	White Respondents		Black Respondents		Asian Respondents		Hispanic Respondents	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Family or Personal Reasons	49	13.4	21	17.1	9	18.0	12	15.6
Financial Reasons	46	12.6	18	14.6	7	14.0	15	19.5
Conflict With Employment	37	10.1	13	10.6	4	8.0	10	13.0
Employment Opportunities	38	10.4	13	10.6	4	8.0	5	6.5
Transferred to Another School	39	10.7	4	3.2	9	18.0	2	2.6
Achieved Educational Goal	26	7.1	14	11.4	1	2.0	7	9.1
Other Reasons Listed on Survey	131	35.7	40	32.5	16	32.0	26	33.7
Total	**366**	**100.0**	**123**	**100.0**	**50**	**100.0**	**77**	**100.0**

Figure 4 presents the four most important reasons for not returning to NVCC by the race of the respondents. As previously shown in Table 7, reasons for not returning to NVCC varied substantially between respondents in different racial categories.

Figure 4: Most Important Reason for Not Returning to NVCC by Race



Most Important Reason for Not Returning by Age

Table 8 presents the primary reasons respondents did not return to NVCC grouped by different age categories. For respondents between 18 and 24 years of age, the most important reason for not returning was finances. In particular, 17% of the respondents between 18 and 21 years of age, and 21% of the respondents between 22 and 24 years of age, indicated their primary reason for discontinuing their education at NVCC was finance related.

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However, older respondents (between 25 and 44 years of age), gave both conflicts with employment and family or personal circumstances more often as reasons for not returning. Specifically, of the respondents 25 to 29 years of age, 20% indicated conflict with employment and 20% indicated family or personal circumstances as the primary reason for not continuing (see Table 8). For respondents 30 to 44 years of age, 27% gave family or personal circumstances as reasons why they discontinued their studies and 15% indicated conflict with employment (see Table 8). It appears that as the respondents' age increased, financial barriers became fewer but family or personal barriers became greater.

Table 8: Most Important Reason for Not Returning to NVCC by Age

Primary Reason	Respondents 18-21 Years of Age		Respondents 22-24 Years of Age		Respondents 25-29 Years of Age		Respondents 30-44 Years of Age	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Family or Personal Reasons	47	12.1	7	10.3	9	20.0	28	26.9
Financial Reasons	64	16.5	14	20.6	5	11.1	5	4.8
Conflict With Employment	31	8.0	7	10.3	9	20.0	16	15.4
Employment Opportunities	39	10.1	7	10.3	8	17.8	6	5.8
Transferred to Another School	56	14.5	1	1.5	0	0.0	1	0.9
Other Reasons Listed on Survey	97	25.1	17	25.0	10	22.2	37	35.6
Total	**387**	**100.0**	**68**	**100.0**	**45**	**100.0**	**104**	**100.0**

Figure 5 presents reasons for not returning to NVCC by the age of the respondent. A higher percentage of younger respondents (18 to 24 years of age) indicated transfer or financial circumstances as reasons for not returning. However, a higher percentage of older respondents (25 to 44 years of age) indicated they did not return to NVCC due to conflicts with current employment and family or personal reasons.

Figure 5: Most Important Reason for Not Returning to NVCC by Age

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Most Important Reason for Not Returning by Educational Objective

When applying to NVCC, all students are asked to indicate their educational objective on their Application for Admission. These objectives include transfer to another institution, advancement in their present job, exploring career possibilities, and self-improvement. Table 9 presents the main reasons why survey respondents did not return to NVCC analyzed by their educational objectives.

Approximately 15% of the respondents, who indicated transfer as their educational objective, stated they had transferred to another school. A slightly greater percentage of the respondents (16%), who stated transfer as their educational objective, did not return due to financial circumstances.

As shown in Table 9, 18% of the respondents, who indicated their educational objective was to advance in their current job, did not return to NVCC due to conflicts with their employment. This was followed by 17% who did not return to NVCC because they had achieved their educational goal and 16% who did not return because of family or personal reasons.

Twenty percent of the respondents, who indicated their educational objective was to explore career possibilities, did not return to NVCC due to financial reasons. In addition, 18% of these respondents did not return due to family or personal circumstances.

Of the respondents who indicated their educational objective was self-improvement, 19% did not return to NVCC because they had achieved their goal (see Table 9). It is important to note that 11% of the respondents, who indicated their objective was self-improvement, did not return to NVCC because of unavailability of courses. This was higher than the overall percentage of respondents who did not return due to unavailability of courses (4%).

Table 9: Most Important Reason for Not Returning to NVCC by Educational Objective

Primary Reason	Transfer		Job Advancement		Career Possibilities		Self-Improvement	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Family or Personal Reasons	47	12.8	12	15.8	13	17.5	15	18.1
Financial Reasons	60	16.4	3	4.0	15	20.3	2	2.4
Conflict With Employment	32	8.7	14	18.4	7	9.4	11	13.3
Employment Opportunities	37	10.1	9	11.8	10	13.5	4	4.8
Other Reasons Listed on Survey	114	31.1	18	23.7	23	31.1	25	30.1
Transferred to Another School	54	14.7	1	1.3	1	1.4	1	1.2
Achieved Educational Goal	17	4.6	13	17.1	3	4.1	16	19.3
Unavailability of Courses	6	1.6	6	7.9	2	2.7	9	10.8
Total	**367**	**100.0**	**76**	**100.0**	**74**	**100.0**	**83**	**100.0**

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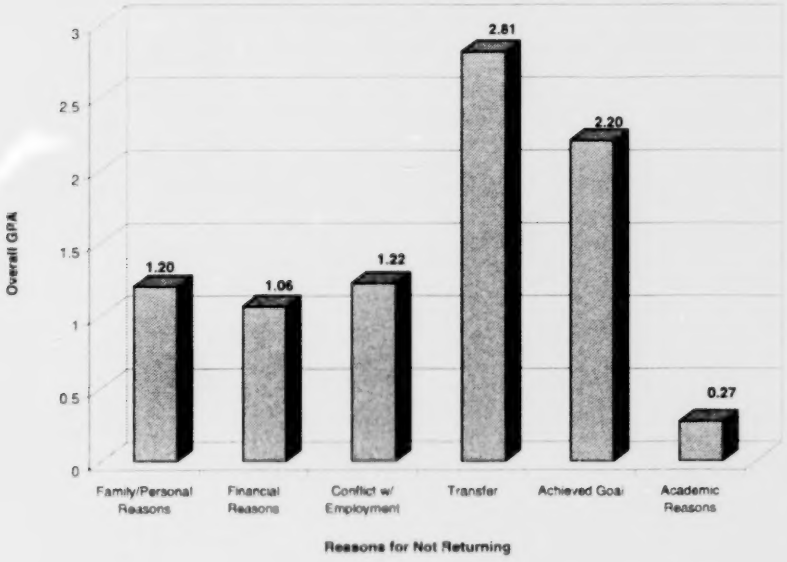
Most Important Reason for Not Returning by Grade Point Average

Responses to the Non-Returning Student Survey were also analyzed by the respondents' overall grade point average (GPA) at the end of the fall 1999 semester. The respondents who indicated they did not return to NVCC because they had transferred to another institution had the highest GPA (2.81) of all the groups. Respondents who did not continue because they had reached their educational goal also had an overall GPA above a "C" average at 2.20.

In contrast to these two groups of non-returning students, respondents who did not return to NVCC due to academic reasons had a much lower overall GPA at 0.27. Also, respondents who gave family or personal, financial, or employment-related reasons for not returning had grade point averages below a "C". The inability to maintain a "C" average as a result of these circumstances might have led some students to leave school (at least temporarily).

Figure 6: Reasons for Not Returning by GPA



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Summary

This report presents the findings from the Non-Returning Student Survey. The Office of Institutional Research (OIR) collected information from students who were enrolled at NVCC during the fall 1999 semester but did not return the following spring semester. Both mail surveys and telephone interviews were conducted in order to understand why students did not return to NVCC.

Survey respondents were asked to indicate their main reason for not returning to NVCC. The largest percentage of respondents, 15%, stated family or personal circumstances was the most important reason for not returning to NVCC in the spring semester. This was followed by 14% who stated financial reasons were the most important factor in their decision not to return. Seventeen percent of the respondents did not return because they had either transferred to another institution or had achieved their educational goals. Approximately 7% of the respondents did not return because of academic reasons or unavailability of courses/programs. Less than 5% of the respondents indicated that their primary reason for not returning was due to dissatisfaction with courses, instructors, College personnel, or academic advising.

Sixty-seven percent of the respondents stated their main reason for not returning to NVCC was temporary. In addition, 63% of the respondents indicated there was a possibility of enrolling at NVCC in the future, and 48% of the respondents stated there was a possibility of attending another college in the future.

The main reasons for not returning to NVCC were analyzed by the respondents' gender, race, age, educational objective, and overall grade point average. Differences emerged when the survey data were analyzed by the various demographic and academic factors. Overall, the most frequently indicated reason for not returning stated by male respondents was financial circumstances. In contrast, female respondents indicated family or personal circumstances as the primary reason for discontinuing their studies. Differences also emerged when analyzing the primary reasons for not returning by the race of the respondents. For example, 18% of the Asian respondents indicated transfer as their primary reason for not returning. This differs from Black and Hispanic respondents, of whom only 3%, in each case, stated transfer as their primary reason for not returning.

Respondents between 18 and 24 years of age stated that the most important reason for not returning was finance related. However, respondents between 25 and 44 years of age most frequently gave both conflicts with employment and family or personal circumstances as reasons for not returning.

The reasons for not returning to NVCC also differed according to the respondents' educational objectives. Approximately 15% of the respondents, who indicated transfer as their educational goal, stated they had transferred to another school. Eighteen percent of the respondents, who indicated their educational objective was to advance in their current job, stated they did not return to NVCC due to conflicts with their employment.

APPENDIX

COMMENTS FROM THE NON-RETURNING STUDENT SURVEY

MAIL SURVEYS *

* The Non-Returning Student Survey had three open-ended questions for students to provide additional comments or concerns. These responses were compiled and are presented in the Appendix. The comments were edited only to provide anonymity for the respondent and/or College personnel.

COMMENTS FROM THE NON-RETURNING STUDENT SURVEY

Table 1: Reasons for Not Returning to NVCC

Reasons for Not Returning to NVCC
You would not take me because I was a day late on my paying for classes. All because of snow.
Move to California.
I had a baby in February.
Undecided on what to major.
Needed to decide what I wanted to do.
Problems with parking.
Classes were not what I was looking for.
Class conflicts with work and home schedule. Class time too long. Child care and transportation unavailable at times of class.
Dedicate more time to my high school functions.
I was supposed to leave for the Army but then found out that I was pregnant and it was too late to register for NVCC.
Not interested in school right now until work requires training available at NVCC and then I'll go part-time.
Decided I was not interested.
I'm home schooled and I haven't graduated from high school yet.
My job did not require another course.
I'm in high school and just took a class to get more education.
I missed the registration for one week. Waiting for the next semester.
Did not register in time.
You cancelled my class.
Just didn't feel like taking classes this semester.
Merely wanted to take a chemistry course; so I did.
Greece.
Joined Army.
Conflict with high school.
Moving out of the country.
The class is full.
Schedules.
Out-of-state tuition for military.
Not ready to focus on classes.
Pregnant.
Instructors don't accept late sign ups.
Death in family.
Single mother doing the best I can!
Snow days.
Moving in April.

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COMMENTS FROM THE NON-RETURNING STUDENT SURVEY

Table 2: Is There Anything That NVCC Could Have Done to Help You Continue Your Studies?

Table 2: Is there anything that NVCC could have done to help you continue with your studies at NVCC?
I think the teachers could have at least allowed me to take the last test. The week of the exam my dad was killed. I was unable to show up for the last test. I came three days later but I was told that I was late.
Let me go to school to get my education. But you would not let me because of snow and because I was one day late because of the weather.
I don't know.
No.
No.
I wasn't ready for college yet. I needed a year off to take class seriously.
Preparation courses for first time students in reading, writing (I didn't prepare myself, haven't been in school in 20 years). Also, I tried to get a tutor within NVCC, but no one ever contacted me.
No.
Financial aid (not sure I'd qualify).
No, I think NVCC was great. I transferred to another school but I intend to take summer courses at NVCC.
I don't have any new opinions because everything in NVCC is marvelous.
No.
A home study course.
No, NVCC has great opportunities for almost anything. As stated above, for personal reasons, I decided not to go. I should have withdrawn from the courses in order for my grades not to be effected, however, I did not.
Very satisfied.
No, I had issues with family and had to move. But I did not want to take Eng 009 and at VCU I don't have to take that non-credit course.
No.
Provide more tutorial services for those who have more difficulty.
Liked the 4:30 pm time slot due to work/home schedule. Was looking for computer classes - already filled.
I was disappointed in the class. I was told I had to take a class and then told that I really didn't need to take it. I totaled my car and instead of extending the one day pass rule, I had to buy another pass. And I know people that have never bought a parking pass.
Yes, financial help. And if I could get the Catalog to the new fall or the one in September because I probably am going back in September.
No.
Be closer to my home.
It seemed as if no one wanted to help me out---they only made it harder for me.
Decided to attend welding school full-time.
Nothing. The scheduling conflicted with home.
My instructor always complained that the class was too big. I mean there were too many people in the class and if you missed class three times you will get an F. My condition could not permit me to attend classes regularly and that is I why I left. I might come back when I get medical treatment.
No comment.
Yes.

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COMMENTS FROM THE NON-RETURNING STUDENT SURVEY

Table 2: Is There Anything That NVCC Could Have Done to Help You Continue Your Studies?

Table 2: Is there anything that NVCC could have done to help you continue with your studies at NVCC?
No.
For ESL classes they need qualified full-time teacher plus they might be bilingual people.
Include IT courses.
Counselor not real helpful, seemed unconcerned, weren't real detailed in answering questions. Did not share all available options concerning degree choice. Did not give me a curriculum sheet or anything, I was very disappointed in my meeting with guidance counselors.
No, right now my schedule is just too full. I am a single parent and need to work to get my child benefits.
Yes, by letting us have more time to pay our fees.
No, not returning because of the school. Relocating to another state.
I moved back to Maryland so it will be much cheaper for me to continue my education with in-state tuition.
No.
I was planning to take MTH 243 and MTH 244 to satisfy a pre-requisite for graduate studies. I completed MTH 243 but MTH 244 was dropped due to insufficient class size. I now find myself still needing to satisfy that pre-requisite.
Limit the number of people in the Welding course to the amount of machines, make sure the instructor has an assistant for each class.
No.
Would like to able to handle both employment and class. After termination of employment, would be interested in self-help programs, i.e., exercise, arts/crafts, mental stimulation. Would like to see introduction to computers at "beginners" level--highlighting the essentials with a term of shorter duration; and geared to the abilities of senior-age students (such as I believe Green Thumb offers). Students could then decide what they would especially like to pursue.
Keep me posted if there are going to be any openings for the courses I wanted to take, yet were full.
I was very happy with NVCC and it really helped me improve my studies and prepare me to transfer to a four-year college.
Everything is fine, just have conflict with my work schedule and job trips.
No.
No.
No.
Maybe offer part time jobs on campus or start a day care for mothers who want to go to school but have to work.
My work is with the airlines and they sent me away for training. I could not attend class so my money all went down the hole. I asked NVCC to not give the money back but to use it on the next semester. I was told "no". I did not want the money back, so because of that there was no money to take a class next semester.
Try to make classes more fun and interesting.
No.
Make clear about availability of counselors/counseling. Still don't know how to go about that!
No.
No.
No everything was fine.
None.
Needed more support, guidance, caring.
Nope I love NVCC. I love the teachers and people.

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COMMENTS FROM THE NON-RETURNING STUDENT SURVEY

Table 2: Is There Anything That NVCC Could Have Done to Help You Continue Your Studies?

Table 2: Is there anything that NVCC could have done to help you continue with your studies at NVCC?
Help me understand more. Get more help in work. Not so many classes in one semester.
No.
No I needed a job.
No.
No.
The College could arrange a day care for students with small children. Also, the schedule of classes is very difficult, since they are in the afternoon.
More support for persons with disabilities.
There is nothing wrong -- good classes and instructors. I only need this class. Thanks.
Not really. There were reasons that could not be helped.
Provide more details on courses, full descriptions and advice so students don't start the wrong courses and when they drop a course, all other courses are full.
None that I can think of.
No.
Give the chance to miss more than 2 classes, opportunity for more make-up work, better American Cinema schedule.
No, moving out of area (military).
Have a biochemistry program.
Yes, make auto mechanics available at your Woodbridge Campus.
No, probably not. I filled out the Financial Aid form.
Let me know the next registration time.
No. I was unable to get to class due to my illness and recuperating.
No.
After my auto wreck, I called the College to drop my classes. I was told I would receive a "w" on my report card. Instead I got "WF" and "F" grades. No one could help me with changes.
No, I don't think so. I had to get a part-time job to solve my financial problems.
No, I was wait listed until 2nd semester and needed to attend an accredited state college until able to transfer. May take summer courses if needed in future.
No.
Don't cancel my guitar class.
No.
No, not really.
More flexible schedule of classes.
The instructors could learn how to teach the class better. Also, don't get frustrated when something is done wrong.
Nope.
No, I just needed to transfer to a four-year university.
I am not sure if there is anything you can do because I was unhappy with my English instructor, which led to my withdrawal from his class.

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COMMENTS FROM THE NON-RETURNING STUDENT SURVEY

Table 2: Is There Anything That NVCC Could Have Done to Help You Continue Your Studies?

Table 2: Is there anything that NVCC could have done to help you continue with your studies at NVCC?
Not really.
No.
Make sure that the teacher knows the course material.
Hire better instructors.
No.
No.
Survey respondent has moved to Greece.
I became frustrated when I had to run around to get my high school-college credits transferred to NVCC. Without those credits I have so much further to go to accomplish my goals at NVCC.
No.
Nope.
No (just transferring schools).
The only thing that I can think to say is to keep up the good work. My stay at NVCC was very enriching and valuable, thank you for your service.
Yes, through better academic advisement and support for new high school grads!
Not count attendance.
No there were family problems and I was unable to return this semester, but I will hopefully be returning either over the summer or the following semester.
No, it was fine the way it was.
Nothing.
Doubt it.
See attached.
I take classes on Ft. Myer. They don't offer any of the classes I need at the time. I will continue with classes when they come up.
No.
Yes, if you have enough classes in the future I will attend.
I will take a summer course at NVCC.
Flexible schedules.
The College is not responsible to keep up with myself, I myself did not keep track of time and when my assignments are due. Maybe if there was a class or something on procrastination.
Help change the unfair practice of charging newly arrived military and their dependents out-of-state tuition. We live here -- we're in-state everywhere else! The US Army moved us to Virginia.
No.
No.
Be more flexible about last day of signing for classes.
Yes, help out-of-state students, review out-of-state students. I'm not a permanent resident but have been living here since 1986.
NVCC did alright, it's just because I had personal problems. It's nobody's fault that I did not return to NVCC.
No.

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COMMENTS FROM THE NON-RETURNING STUDENT SURVEY

Table 2: Is There Anything That NVCC Could Have Done to Help You Continue Your Studies?

Table 2: Is there anything that NVCC could have done to help you continue with your studies at NVCC?
No.
Yes! Find any job that I could have done at school and pay with it my studies. That will help me to be more close with my school and improve my English level to the top.
Maybe have child care on campus.
No.
Send class information out sooner.
Help me so I can pay the charge because I have a family and I couldn't pay much.
No.
No.
No- I only take classes for fun.
No.

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COMMENTS FROM THE NON-RETURNING STUDENT SURVEY

Table 3: Comments or Suggestions for College Administrators

Table 3: Comments or Suggestions for College Administrators
Let the ones that want to go to school go. Don't stop them.
None.
Great job. I'll be back.
I enjoyed my time at NVCC, and I learned a lot while I was there. Thanks.
Keep doing a good job to help students.
I just took this semester off to have my baby. I will be back for the summer semester.
I am sorry for taking such a long time to respond back with this survey. I hope to enroll for a better outcome in the fall of 2000.
Job well done.
I am a student who studied in NVCC. I suffered from many things whenever I went to ask anyone who works at CE building. They never help you as you want. By the way the English system is really nothing. It is sort of a waste of time with many levels to finish English. That's taking advantage of your students.
Dr. X - Annandale campus is an excellent teacher.
Let people know if a class is going to teach you something or just be an easy A. Counselors should know more about the instructors.
I really enjoyed my Spanish professor, X.
Nope.
I need information on enrolling as an independent student.
To give child care classes at other NVCC centers. Alexandria building is far and really conflicts with work schedule. Annandale closer.
Use the Internet more: post grades, allow class changes, submit homework.
ESL students should have free parking in campus. For new students they should give discount in tuition fees.
I think the College is great and affordable for most of the people. It would be great if you try to have more tutors to help students.
N/a. Staff that really care and are concerned about students reaching career goals.
Stop sending me mail.
Consider combining the two courses into one 4-credit course and teach the complete sequence in one semester.
Closer attention to all students in class. Limit class number to the amount of welding machines.
Clarification of answers by respondent: I have re-entered the work-place at age 77, and so this has influenced my answers. I work on a part-time basis.
Actually, I like that you worry about students that do not return, that shows that you worry about the student as a person.
Some of the teachers are just too hard. The teacher needs to realize that the students have families.
I needed NVCC for one semester while awaiting spring admissions to VA Tech.
Maybe you could do another jump start program but not with computers - maybe communication or secretarial work.
The money that I used for that class that I could not attend could have been used for the next semester. I'm not saying that you should give everyone their money back just because they don't like the class, but just those who run into problems. I just think that the money could have been transferred over for the next semester. That would have been helpful. Thanks.
I attended off-site, where your instructor came to my place of employment. It is a wonderful program and was the only way I saw to take a computer class since I live over 50 miles from work. This was the only class I felt I needed at the present time for my job. In the future, as I adjust to being gone from home 13 hours a day, perhaps I can consider taking more. For now, homework was "the straw that broke the camel's back"---it consumed my Sunday afternoons and my family life is too busy for that! However, I am very

COMMENTS FROM THE NON-RETURNING STUDENT SURVEY
Table 3: Comments or Suggestions for College Administrators

Table 3: Comments or Suggestions for College Administrators
thankful for the course, the instructor, and the general knowledge I received.
None.
Glad to have option (if any) to return. Parental pressure may influence return.
Give students millions of dollars. Just kidding.
Please guide the students. Because if you don't care, they won't either.
Be more personal. They sometimes don't act very friendly outside of the classroom.
Have more help for people with LD.
None.
Have more classes for ESL, and at night. They filled too fast and not many choices of times.
Send out course programs to students as early as possible.
I had no problem with NVCC. My job has not authorized another class yet.
Military personnel often have conflicting schedules making it necessary to provide extra support and opportunities. Service members should have every opportunity to better themselves through an adaptable educational environment.
Add more trade/tech courses.
Teachers should be required to have student evaluations.
I think NVCC is a great place to take some extra classes. If I wasn't going to UVA next year I would love to take more auto mechanics courses.
I'm sorry that I couldn't go to school this semester. Hopefully, by next semester I'll be financially ready. Thanks.
Have pleasant personnel who speak English and have good manners.
I enjoyed my teachers.
I think NVCC is great--as this follow-up survey proves. I moved to Arizona and attend Mesa Community College. NVCC is better!
None.
The instructors were nice but they need to learn how to teach the students better instead of us figuring it out for ourselves.
Make teacher's qualifications available to students so teachers will care more and students have confidence in their teachers' standards. Have teachers rated by students and make that info available in your database?
The instructor I had for the short time I was there was great!
Well, the admissions clerks seemed to think that all questions were a spiteful attempt to hinder them. I felt distinctly un-welcomed and I was disappointed with the "slackers" attitude of the other students in the class. But (a) I only intended to enroll in one course at NVCC to supplement my senior year in high school, and (b) I am presently enrolled in an ELI course so it's not as though I've completely "dropped out".
My experience at NVCC was a very positive one. However, a 4 year school with a large theatre arts department more meets my career & educational needs.
The only reason I did not return was a changing, busy schedule.
None.
Being a student at NVCC, I received great service in education. If I wasn't moving out of the country in a month, I would still be attending now. Thank you again!
I needed special help, asked for it and did not get it.
Wish they had more to offer in beginning computer classes. You go from basic to advanced with no in between!

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COMMENTS FROM THE NON-RETURNING STUDENT SURVEY

Table 3: Comments or Suggestions for College Administrators

Table 3: Comments or Suggestions for College Administrators
Please keep up the good work.
Thank you for your time.
Though I did not return this semester I will be returning in the summer. My class was great and my professor was wonderful and still is. He teaches Western Civilization (CIS). Thank you.
I enjoyed attending NVCC. Next semester I will try my best to enroll again. Thanks for caring. I hope this survey helps. Have a great year.
Accepted to VA Tech in Spring. Went to NVCC to fulfill 1st semester requirements.
Review out-of-state records, do updates.
Keep it real.
I really enjoyed my time at NVCC. I met a lot of new people and my teachers were great. NVCC showed and opened up many doors for me. I wouldn't change anything.
Be more supportive. I am mentally handicapped.
Yes, NVCC has excellent ESL teachers that work with emphasis to let us enter into this country and I hope all administrators still contribute to the development of all the ESL students. Thank you.
Keep up the good work.
None.
Right know my dream is to go back to school and because of money problems I couldn't go back. I have to work and save money and then I'm going to be at NVCC in the summer. I suggest more offices for people who have problems like me.
None.
I appreciated the woman who cancelled my class for me over the phone since I could not make it in due to the snow.

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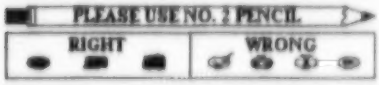
Office of Institutional Research
Survey of Non-Returning Students
*****CONFIDENTIAL SURVEY*****

HOW TO COMPLETE THIS SURVEY:



The Office of Institutional Research at Northern Virginia Community College (NVCC) is interested in learning the reason(s) why students do not return to NVCC. Your responses will help us to develop strategies and provide support services for all our students.

Your opinions and responses are valuable and will be completely confidential. Your responses will not be linked with your name in any way. To mark an answer, use a dark pencil or pen to color in the circle next to the response of your choice. Do NOT mark the answer with a check and do NOT circle it.

---

1. Please indicate whether any of the following were reasons for **NOT RETURNING** to Northern Virginia Community College (NVCC) this semester. Mark all the letters that apply.

   a. Transferred to another school
   b. Achieved educational goal
   c. Financial reasons (lack of funds, new financial commitment, etc.)
   d. Academic reasons (classes too difficult, disappointment with my grades, etc.)
   e. Employment opportunities (new job, change of job, etc.)
   f. Conflict with employment (change in work schedule, etc.)
   g. Health reasons
   h. Family or personal reasons (too busy, etc.)
   i. Unavailability of courses/programs (courses/programs filled too quickly, etc.)
   j. Dissatisfied with course(s)
   k. Dissatisfied with instructor(s)
   l. Dissatisfied with college staff
   m. Dissatisfied with NVCC facilities (academic labs, libraries, tutorial support, etc.)
   n. Dissatisfied with academic advising or counseling
   o. Child care problem(s) (couldn't find appropriate child care, no child care on campus, etc.)
   p. Transportation problem(s) (too far from Metro, lack of reliable transportation, etc.)
   q. Relocation/distance (moved away from an NVCC campus; too far from my home, work, etc.)
   r. Other: _____

2. Which was the **SINGLE** most important reason for not returning to NVCC? (Using the reasons from Question 1, mark one of the letters.)

3. In general, how would you classify the reason(s) you selected in Question 1?

   Temporary Permanent Don't know

4. Do you think you will return to NVCC in the future?

   Yes No Maybe Don't know

5. Do you think you will attend another college in the future?

   Yes No Maybe Don't know

6. Is there anything that NVCC could have done to help you continue with your studies at NVCC?

   _____
   _____
   _____

7. Please write any comments or suggestions you have for College administrators.

   _____
   _____
   _____

For office use only:

Thank you for your time. Mail survey using the enclosed pre-paid envelope, ***no postage is required****. If you have any questions about the survey, please contact the Office of Institutional Research at (703) 323-4577.*

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NORTHERN VIRGINIA COMMUNITY COLLEGE

COLLEGE MISSION AND GOALS

The mission of Northern Virginia Community College is to respond to the educational needs of its dynamic and diverse constituencies through an array of comprehensive programs and services that facilitate learning and workforce development in an environment of open access and lifelong educational opportunities.

To achieve this mission, the following strategic goals for 1999-2001 are established:

I. Sustain and Strengthen Academic Quality and Teaching Excellence.

II. Enhance the Quality of Services to Students.

III. Expand the Integration of Technology in Instruction and Administration.

IV. Increase Access to College Programs and Services.

V. Improve the Quality of Institutional Communication.

VI. Strengthen Programs That Help Build a World Class Workforce.

VII. Promote Responsiveness to Diversity of Students and Employees.

VIII. Strengthen and Develop Additional Linkages with Community Groups.

IX. Integrate College Planning and Facility Requirements.

X. Enhance the Overall Wellness of Our Working and Living Environments.